1976

Ideology and Utopia as Cultural Imagination

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Cover Page Footnote

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The purpose of this paper is to put the two phenomena of ideology and utopia within a single conceptual framework which I will designate as a theory of cultural imagination. From this connection under this mere formal title, I expect two things: First, a better understanding of the ambiguity which they both have in common to the extent that each of them covers a set of expressions ranging from wholesome to pathological forms, from distorting to constitutive roles. Second, a better grasp of their complementarity in a system of social action. In other words, my contention is that the polarity between ideology and utopia and the polarity within each of them may be ascribed to some structural traits of cultural imagination.

The polarity between ideology and utopia has been scarcely taken as a theme of inquiry since the time when Karl Mannheim wrote his seminal work Ideologie und Utopie in 1929. Today we have, on the one hand, a critique of ideologies stemming from the Marxist and post-Marxist tradition and expanded by the Frankfurt school, and, on the other hand, a history of utopias, sometimes a sociology of utopia, but with little connection to the so-called Ideologiekritik. Yet Karl Mannheim had paved the way for a joint treatment of both ideology and utopia by looking at them as deviant attitudes toward social reality. This criterion of non-congruence or discrepancy presupposes that individuals as well as collective entities may be related to social reality not only in the mode of a participation without distance, but also in a mode of non-congruence which may assume various forms. This presupposition is precisely that of a social or cultural imagination operating in many ways, including both constructive and destructive ones. It may be a fruitful hypothesis that the polarity of ideology and utopia has to do with different figures of non-congruence, typical of social imagination. Moreover, it is quite possible that the positive side of the one and the positive side of the other are in the same complementary relation as the negative and pathological side of the one is to the negative and pathological side of the other.

But before being able to say something about this over-arching complementarity between two phenomena which are themselves two-sided, let us speak of each phenomenon separately in order to discover the place of the one on the borderline of the other.

I shall start from the pole of ideology.

In this section devoted to the phenomenon of ideology, I propose that we start from the evaluative concept of ideology, i.e., the pejorative concept in which ideology is understood as concealment and distortion. Our task will be to inquire into the presuppositions by means of which this pejorative concept of ideology makes sense. This kind of regressive procedure will lead us from the surface layer of the phenomenon to its depth structure. This procedure is not intended to refute the initial concept, but to establish it on a sounder basis than the polemical claim to which it first gives expression.

I borrow this initial concept of ideology from Marx's German Ideology. The choice of this starting point has a twofold advantage. On the one hand, it provides us with a concept of ideology which is not yet opposed to an alleged Marxist science (which is still to be written), but to the concept of the real living individual

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under definite material conditions. Therefore we are not yet trapped by the insoluble problem of science versus ideology. On the other hand, The German Ideology is already a Marxist text which breaks with the idealistic philosophy of the young Hegelians who put "consciousness," "self-consciousness," "Man," "species-being," and "the Unique," at the root of their anthropology. A new anthropology has emerged for which reality means praxis, i.e., the activity of human individuals submitted to circumstances which are felt as compulsory and seen as powers foreign to their will.

It is against this background that ideology is defined as the sphere of representations, ideas, and conceptions versus the sphere of actual production, as the imaginary versus the real, as the way individuals "may appear (erscheinen) in their own or other people's representation (Vorstellung)," versus the way "they really (wirklich) are, i.e., operate (wirken), produce materially, and hence work under definite material limits, presuppositions, and conditions independent of their will."

The first trait of ideology therefore is this gap between the unactual representations in general (religious, political, juridical, ethical, aesthetical, etc.) and the actuality of the life-process. This first trait leads immediately to the next one: the dependence of what is less actual on what is more actual. "Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life." Here we are not far from the idea that in ideology we find only "reflexes and echos of this life-process," which implies in turn that only the practical processes of life have a history. Ideology has no history of its own, even no history at all. We may now shift easily to the decisive trait. Ideology, then appears as the inverted image of reality. "If in all ideology men and their circumstances appear upside-down as in a camera obscura, the phenomenon arises just as much from their historical life-process as the inversion of objects on the retina does from their physical life-process."

This metaphor of the inverted image will provide the guideline for our inquiry. What is at stake here is not the empirical accuracy of the descriptive arguments offered by Marx, but the meaningfulness or intelligibility of the concept of ideology as an inverted image of reality. In the Manuscripts of 1844, an interpretation was given which relied basically on Feuerbach's notion of "estrangement," conceived as the inversion of the process of "objectification." This is the process by which man's consciousness generates its own existence by actualizing itself in some external entity or entities. Through "estrangement," the result of this radical production becomes an external power to which man becomes enslaved. Indeed, this schema of estrangement as the inversion of the process of self-objectification is no longer applied by Marx to the religious sphere as in Feuerbach, but to the sphere of labor and private property. It is labor which is estranged under the power of private property. But labor is still conceived in metaphysical terms according to the paradigm of objectification, of becoming an object in order to become oneself.

With The German Ideology, the concept of the division of labor tends to replace that of estrangement or alienation, or at least to fill it with a more concrete content. The fragmentation of human activity becomes the equivalent of what had been called estrangement. "The division of labor offers us the first example of how as long as man remains in natural society, that is, as long as a cleavage exists between the particular and the common interests, as long therefore as activity is not voluntarily but naturally divided, man's own deed becomes an alien power opposed to him which enslaves him instead of being controlled by him." Within this new framework ideology appears as a particular case of the division of labor. "Division of labor only becomes truly such from the moment when a division of material and mental labor appears. (The first form of ideologists—priests—is concurrent.) From this mo-

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ment onwards consciousness can really flatter itself that it is something other than consciousness of existing practice, that it really represents something without representing something real; from now on consciousness is in a position to emancipate itself from the world, and to proceed to the formulation of 'pure' theory, theology, philosophy, ethics, etc."

Thus the metaphor of the inverted image refers as least to an initial phenomenon, the division of labor, the history of which may be empirically stated.

But, if the division of labor partially explains the tendency of conscious representations to become autonomous, it does not explain their tendency to become illusory. Of course, a mode of thought which would not be autonomous as regards its basis in practical life would have no chance of becoming distorted. Marx has a remark about this non-autonomous, non-distorted mode of thought which he very properly calls the "language of real life." "Conceiving, thinking, the mental intercourse of men, appear at this stage as the direct efflux (Ausfluss) of their material behavior." It is on this "language of real life" that a "real, positive science" has to be grafted, a science which would be no longer an empty "representation, but the actual depiction or presentation (Darstellung) of the practical activity."

Division of labor therefore does not explain either the initial stage, that of the language of real life, which will later provide us with the basic concept of ideology taken in the sense of Clifford Geertz's concept of symbolic action, or the final stage, that of an autonomy of the representational world becoming an inverted image of real practical life.

Let us set aside the problem raised by this initial stage which Marx refers to as the language of life and focus on the effects of the seclusion of the intellectual process from its basis in practical life. How does autonomy generate illusion?

The gap between mere autonomy and distortion is partially filled by the insertion of the concepts of class and ruling class between the concept of the division of labor and that of ideology. "The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e., the class which is the ruling material force of society is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships, the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas; hence of the relationships which make the one class the ruling one, therefore the ideas of its dominance."

These concepts of "ruling class" and "ruling ideas" are so decisive that after they have been introduced the nuclear concept of the division of labor itself has to be referred to the class structure. "The division of labor...manifests itself also in the ruling class as the division of mental and material labor, so that inside this class one part appears as the thinkers of the class (its active, conceptive ideologists, who make the perfecting of the illusion of the class about itself their chief source of livelihood), while the other's attitude to these ideas and illusions is more passive and receptive, because they are in reality the active members of this class and have less time to make up illusions and ideas about themselves."

If we stay for awhile with Marx's assumption that "the ideas of a ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas," it remains to be explained how "dominant material relationships" become "ruling ideas." Marx says that ruling ideas are the "ideal expression" of these relationships. Two difficulties are implied here. I shall put aside the first one which concerns the notion of an idea "expressing" a process rooted in practical life and admittedly prior to consciousness, representations, and ideas . What is at stake here is the very dichotomy between real and imaginary evoked at the beginning of our analysis of the concept of ideology. Marx himself suggests by his allusion to the "language of life" that there must be a place or stage in which

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praxis itself implies some symbolic mediation. I shall return to this point later to show that the concept of distortion only makes sense it it applies to a previous process of symbolization constitutive of action as such. This will provide us with the first concept of ideology.

Let us rather focus on the second difficulty implied by the statement that the ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas because the ruling ideas are held to be the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships. This difficulty concerns the process of idealization by which an expression becomes a ruling idea. What is an ideal expression?

Marx explains this idealization in the following way. "Each new class which puts itself in the place of one ruling before it is compelled, merely in order to carry through its aim, to represent its interest as the common interest of all the members of society, that is, expressed in ideal form: it has to give its ideas the form of universality, and represent them as the only rational, universally valid ones." According to this explanation the necessity to represent a particular interest as general is the key to the process of idealization. The metaphor of the inverted image borrowed from the experience of the <u>camera</u> <u>obscura</u> and already extended to the image on the retina loses much of its enigmatic obscurity when it is related to the substitution of the rule of certain ideas for the rule of a certain class. The inverted image is "this whole semblence, that the rule of a certain class is only the rule of certain ideas".

But has the enigma of the inverted image become completely transparent? This can be questioned. How can a particular interest be represented as general? This role of representation as the concealment of the particularity of interest under a claim to generality is more the name of a problem than that of a solution. Is there only one way to proceed to this concealment? Are all the cultural products of the bourgeoisie in the XVIIth and XVIIIth centuries, for example, equally such false representations? How can we account for their immense variety? Can they be reduced to a unique ideological field? If so, how does the ideological field govern productions in this field? And how does it generate the differences between those individual works? Above all, how does the ideological field of an epoch, taken as a unique network, refer to its real basis, i.e., to the system of interests of the so-called ruling class?

Orthodox Marxism has attempted to solve these paradoxes by assuming that a cau s.a l relation holds between the economic basis and the ideological superstructure. This causal relationship is such that, on the one hand, the mode of production determines in the last instance the superstructures while, on the other hand, the superstructures enjoy a relative autonomy and a specific effectivity. Production is the determinant factor, but only in the last instance. Engels will refine this formula in his well-known letter to Bloch of 21 September 1890.

Unfortunately this formula only gives us the two ends of the chain, somewhat like those formulas of theology which attempt to tie together divine predestination and human free-will. In fact, nobody is able to discover what goes on between them. Why? Because the problem is insoluble so long as it is put within the framework of causal relationships between structures, as we do when we speak of relative effectivity and of determination in the last instance. Before being able to speak of relative or ultimate effectivity, we must inquire whether the question has been posed in terms which make sense. I should like to suggest that Marx himself had opened a more fruitful path when he declared that "each new class which puts itself in the place of one ruling before it is compelled merely in order to carry through its aim to represent its interests as the common interest of every member of society." According to this formulation the relation between the interest and its ideal expres-

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sion cannot be put within the framework of causation, but requires something like a relation of motivation. What is at stake here is a process of legitimation, of justification, described by Marx as a "necessity to represent a particular interest as general, as the only rational, universally valid one."

But besides the fundamental obscurity of the notion of an interest "expressed" in ideas, the process which gives ideas the form of universality has still to be explained. This cunning of interest, substituted for the Hegelian cunning of reason, remains enigmatic. On the one hand, it presupposes that the notions of rationality and universal validity make sense by themselves, besides and before their fraudulent capture by the ruse of interest. On the other hand, this capture itself presupposes that domination cannot succeed without the acceptance of the arguments offered to legitimize the claims of the ruling class. This connection between domination and legitimation constitutes in my opinion one of the two unsolved enigmas of the Marxist concept of ideology, the second being more radical in that it concerns the fundamental tie between an interest and its alleged expression.

Both difficulties exceed the capabilities of Marxist thought.

The first one, the connection between the ruling class and the ruling ideas, is only a particular case of the larger problem of the relation between domination and legitimation. To say this is not to diminish the merit of Marx. He has delineated a fundamental source of ideology by connecting it to the central structure of domination embodied in the class structure of society. But it is not certain that the class structure and its corollary notion of a ruling class exhaust the phenomenon of domination. It is quite possible that both the notions of class and ruling class display only one side or one aspect of the problem of domination.

It has been the great merit of Max Weber to have approached the problem of domination as a specific problem. In Wirschaft und Gesellschaft, he first discusses the typology of order in corporate groups as a problem of its own. Then he refers the functioning of power (Macht), or domination or imperative control (Herrschaft), to this typology of order. Only then does he introduce the notion of political power as one kind of "imperatively coordinated corporate group." The state is the compulsory political association implying continuous organization. "This kind of organization will be called a state if and only insofar as its administrative staff successfully upholds a claim to the monoply of the legitimate use of physical force in the enforcement of its order." It is within this broad framework that the problem of the basis of legitimacy may be raised. And it is raised in the following terms:

> It is an induction from experience that no system of authority
> voluntarily limits itself to the appeal to material or affectual
> or ideal motives as a basis for guaranteeing its continuance.
> In addition every such system attempts to establish and to cul-
> tivate the belief in its "legitimacy."

Therefore the ground on which this problem makes sense is that of human action as having motives. The belief in the existence of a legitimate order relies on this assumption. The problem of validity cannot be raised in other terms than those of the motivation of meaningful action. It presupposes that the types of authority can be classified according to the kind of claims to legitimacy typically made by each.

My contention is that the problem raised by Marx about the relation between the ruling class and ruling ideas is capable if not of a complete solution, at least of a rational treatment. The question now is that of the relation between a claim to legitimacy and a belief in legitimacy, a claim raised by the authority, and a belief conceded by the individuals. As is well known, Max Weber considered three types of legitimate authority according to the basis alleged for the validity of these claims: ra-

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tional, traditional, and charismatic grounds. This typology is not our problem here. Our problem is that of correctly "placing" ideology in this process.

I wonder whether the function of ideology here is not to fill up what we could call a credibility gap. By this I mean the unavoidable excess of the claim over a-gainst the belief. In this sense, I should be tempted to speak of the attempt to fill this gap as a case of overvalue, to borrow a term that Marx used to characterize the surplus of value provided by labor and diverted by the owners of capital. Is it not the case that any authority always claims more than what we can offer in terms of belief? If this is the case, then could we not say that the main function of a system of ideology is to reinforce the belief in the legitimacy of the given systems of auth-ority in such a way that it meets the claim to legitimacy? Ideology would be the system of justification capable of filling up the gap of political overvalue.

With this function of justification the aspect of distortion becomes more under-standable. The relation between claim and belief which is described in terms of over-value is the place par excellence of dissimulation and distortion. No system of legit-imacy is completely transparent. The process which Marx describes as giving "ideas the form of universality, and presenting them as the only rational, universally valid ones," makes sense as the kind of distortion required by the claim to legitimacy. But it only makes sense under several conditions. First, that an interest asserts itself at the level of power or authority. Second, that authority makes itself acceptable at the level of a claim to legitimacy and not only at the level of sheer application of force. Third, that rationality is understood for its own sake as the general horizon of understanding and mutual recognition before being unduly diverted for the sake of a ruling group, be it a class or any other dominant group. Whatever may be the complex relationships between interest, authority, legitimacy, belief, and ideology, these factors work and make sense within a system of motivation, not of causation.

We are now ready to address the most difficult problem. The preceding discus-sion moves within the sphere of ideas. Ideology gives ideas the form of universality. But what about the assumed relationship between interest and idea? Are we not too easily satisfied with the assumption that interests "express" themselves through i-deas? The initial dichotomy Marx imposed on the whole problem—I mean, the dis-tinction between what people are and do, on the one hand, and how they appear in their own or other people's imagination, on the other—at least has the advantage of transforming a triviality into a paradox: if praxis and representation move on dif-ferent planes, how can the latter express the former? This question is raised in its most radical way by Marx's phrase "the language of real life" and by the claim graf-ted on this assumption that a real and positive science is possible which would be the depiction or presentation (Darstellung) of practical life.

Here Clifford Geertz may be helpful when he relates all the distorting functions of ideology to a more basic function, that of mediating and integrating human ac-tion at its public level. In his seminal article, "Ideology as a Cultural System," re-printed in The Interpretation of Cultures, he shows very clearly that the main avail-able theories of ideologies, Marxist and non-Marxist, fail to give a meaningful ac-count of the concept of expression in such phrases as "the expression of interests or of conflicts in the sphere of ideas." He forcefully demonstrates that an interest the-ory as well as a strain theory fail to show how ideologies transform sentiment into significance and make it socially available. In both theories the diagnostic is sound, but the explanation is deficient. The reason is that in both cases the autonomous process of symbolic formulation has been overlooked.

To fill this lacune, he suggests that we apply the concept of symbolic action ad-vocated by Kenneth Burke in his Philosophy of Literary Forms: Studies in Symbol-

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ic Action to the theory of ideologies. What these theories of ideology fail to understand is that action in its most elementary forms is already mediated and articulated by symbolic systems. If this is the case, the explanation of action has to be itself mediated by an interpretation of its ruling symbols. Without recourse to the ultimate layer of symbolic action, of action symbolically articulated, ideology has to appear as the intellectual depravity that its opponents aim to unmask. But this therapeutic enterprise is itself senseless if it is incapable of relating the mask to the face. This cannot be done as long as the rhetorical force of the surface ideology is not related to that of the depth layer of symbolic systems which constitute and integrate the social phenomenon as such.

How shall we interpret this integrative function? Clifford Geertz is right, I think, when he suggests transferring some of the methods and results of literary criticism to the field of the sociology of culture and treating ideology as a kind of figurative language. "With no notion of how metaphor, analogy, irony, ambiguity, pun, paradox, hyperbole, rhythm, and all the other elements of what we lamely call style operate...in casting personal attitudes into public form," it is impossible to construe the import of ideological assertions.

The advantage of this connection between tropology and ideology is that it helps us solve the problem which is concealed more than delineated by the phrase "the expression of interests in ideas." If the rhetoric of ideology proceeds like, say, that of metaphor, then the relation between the ideology and its so-called real basis may be compared to the relation of reference which a metaphorical utterance entertains with the situation it redescribes. When Marx says that the ruling class imposes its ideas as the ruling ideas by representing them as ideal and universal, does not this device have some affinity with the hyperbole described by rhetoricans?

If this comparison between ideology and rhetorical devices works and holds, the decisive conclusion to draw is this: Under the layer of distorting representation we find the layer of the systems of legitimation meeting the claim to legitimacy of the given system of authority. But under these systems of legitimation we discover the symbolic systems constitutive of action itself. As Clifford Geertz says, they provide a template or blueprint for the organization of social and psychological processes, as genetic systems provide such a template or blueprint for the organization of organic processes.

A first corollary of this statement is that the initial opposition between real active life process and distorting representations is as such meaningless if distortion is not a pathological process grafted on the structure of action symbolically articulated. If action is not symbolic from the very beginning, then no magic will be able to draw an illusion from an interest.

A second corollary is still more important because it will provide us with a transition to the problem of utopia. At its three levels, distortion, legitimation, symbolization, ideology has one fundamental function: to pattern, to consolidate, to provide order to the course of action. Whether it preserves the power of a class, or insures the duration of a system of authority, or patterns the stable functioning of a community, ideology has a function of conservation in both a good and a bad sense of the word. It preserves, it conserves, in the sense of making firm the human order that could be shattered by natural or historical forces, by external or internal disturbances. All the pathology of ideology proceeds from this "conservative" role of ideology.

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On Utopia

The shadow of the forces capable of shattering a given order is already the shadow of an alternative order that could be opposed to the given order. It is the function of utopia to give the force of discourse to this possibility. What hinders us from recognizing this connection between ideology and utopia is precisely what appears at first glance to be utopia's place in discourse. In its strict sense, utopia is a literary genre.

Thomas More coined the term in 1516, as a title for his famous book, Utopia, and the word means the island which is nowhere. "It is a place which has no place." As a genre, utopia has a literary existence. It is a way of writing. But this literary criterion may prevent us from perceiving the complementarity and, in general, the subtle relationships between ideology and utopia. Ideology has no literary existence, since it has no knowledge of itself; whereas utopia asserts itself as utopia and knows itself as utopian. This is why utopia may be claimed by its author, whereas I know of no author who would claim that what he is doing is ideology, except for the French "ideologists" of the XVIIIth century. But that was before Napoleon made their name infamous. We may name authors of utopias, but we are unable to ascribe ideologies to specific authors.

Moreover, we are related to ideology by a process of unmasking which implies that we do not share in what Marx called the illusions of the epoch, but we may read utopias without calculating or committing ourselves to the probability of their projects.

In order to initiate a parallelism between utopia and ideology, we have to proceed from the literary genre to the "utopian mode," to use a distinction borrowed from Raymond Ruyer in his L'Utopie et les utopies (Paris: P.U.F., 1950). This shift implies that we forget the literary structure of utopia and also that we overcome the specific contents of proposed utopias. As long as we remain at the level of their thematic content, we will be disappointed to discover that in spite of the permanence of certain themes such as the status of the family, the consumption of goods, the appropriation of things, the organization of political life, and the role of religion, each of these topics is treated in such a variety of ways as to imply the most contradictory proposals for changing society. This paradox provides us with a clue for interpreting the utopian mode in terms of a theory of imagination rather than emphasizing its content.

The utopian mode is to the existence of society what invention is to scientific knowledge. The utopian mode may be defined as the imaginary project of another kind of society, of another reality, another world. Imagination is here constitutive in an inventive rather than an integrative manner, to use an expression of Henri Desroche.

If this general feature of the utopian mode holds, it is easy to understand why the search for "otherness" has no thematic unity, but instead implies the most diverse and opposed claims. Another family, another sexuality, may mean monacism or sexual community. Another way of consuming may mean asceticism or sumptous consumption. Another relation to property may mean direct appropriation without rules as in many "Robinsonades" or artificial accurate planification. Another relation to the government of people may mean self-government or authoritarian rule under a virtuous and disciplined bureaucracy. Another relation to religion may mean radical atheism or new cultic festivity. And we could make numerous additions to these variations on the theme of "otherness" in every domain of communal existence.

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Another step, however, leads beyond the mode of utopia to "the spirit of utopia," to once again use Raymond Ruyer's categories. To this spirit belong the fundamental ambiguities which have been assigned to utopia and which affect its social function. We discover at this level a range of functional variations which may be paralleled with those of ideology and which sometimes intersect those functions which we earlier described as ranging from the integrative to the distorting.

At this stage of our analysis the regressive method we applied to ideology may be helpful for disentangling the ambiguities of the utopian spirit. Just as we are tempted by the Marxist tradition to interpret ideology in terms of delusion, so we may be inclined to construe the concept of utopia on the basis of its quasi-pathological expressions. But let us resist this temptation and follow a course of analysis similar to the one which we followed concerning ideology.

Let us begin from the kernel idea of "nowhere" implied by the very word "utopia" and Thomas More's descriptions: a place which has no place, a ghost city; for a river, no water; for a prince, no people, etc. What must be emphasized is the benefit of this kind of extra-territoriality for the social function of utopia. From this "no-place," an exterior glance is cast on our reality, which suddenly looks strange, nothing more being taken for granted. The field of the possible is now opened beyond that of the actual, a field for alternative ways of living. The question therefore is whether imagination could have any constitutive role without this leap outside. Utopia is the way in which we radically rethink what is family, consumption, government, religion, etc. The fantasy of an alternative society and its topographical figuration "nowhere" works as the most formidable contestation of what is. What some, for example, call conscientization (mainly in Latin America), or what elsewhere is called cultural revolution, proceeds from the possible to the real, from fantasy to reality.

Utopia thus appears as the counterpart of the basic concept of ideology where it is understood as a function of social integration. By way of contrast, utopia appears as the function of social subversion.

Having said this, we can extend our parallelism a step further following the intermediate concept of ideology, ideology understood as a tool of legitimation applied to given systems of authority. Ultimately what is at stake in utopia is the apparent givenness of every system of authority. And our previous interpretation of the process of legitimation gives us a clue to the way in which utopia works at this level. We assumed that one of the functions, if not the main one, of ideology was to provide a kind of overvalue or surplus value to the belief in the validity of authority such that the system of power may implement its claim to legitimacy. If it is true that ideologies tend to bridge the credibility gap of every system of authority and eventually to dissimulate it, could we not say that it is one of the functions of utopia, if not its main function, to reveal the undeclared overvalue and in that way to unmask the pretense proper to every system of legitimacy? In order words, utopias always imply alternative ways of using power, whether in family, political, economic, or religious life, and in that way they call established systems of power into question.

Once again, this function may assume different forms at the level of thematic content. Another society means another power, either a more rational power, or a more ethical power, or a null power if it is claimed that power as such is ultimately bad or beyond rescue.

That the problematic of power is the kernel problem of every utopia is confirmed not only by the description of social and political fantasies of a literary kind, but also by an examination of the various attempts to actualize utopias. The prose of

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the utopian genre does not exhaust the utopian mode or the utopian spirit. There are (partially) realized utopias. These are, it is true, mainly micro-societies, some more permanent than others, ranging from the monastery to the kibbutz or commune. But they are utopian in the sense that they constitute kinds of laboratories or minature experiments for broader projects involving the whole of society.

If we try to find a common trait of such diverse experiments, their common concern seems to be the exploration of the possible ways of exerting power without resorting to violence. These attempts to actualize utopia testify not only to the seriousness of the utopian spirit, but also to its aptitude to address itself to the paradoxes of power.

The modern utopias of our generation provide an additional confirmation of this thesis. They are all in one way or another directed against the abstraction, the anonymity, and the reification of the bureaucratic state. Such atoms of self-management are all challenges to the bureaucratic state. Their claim for radical equality and the complete redistribution of the ways in which decisions are made implies an alternative to the present uses of power in our society.

If it is true that ideology and utopia meet at this intermediary level of the legitimation or contestation of the system of power, it becomes understandable that the pathology of utopia corresponds too to the pathology of ideology. In the same way we were able to recognize in the positive concept of ideology, ideology as conservation, the germ of its negative counterpart, the distortion of reality and the dissimulation of its own process, so we may perceive the origin of the specific pathology of utopia in its most positive functioning. Because utopia proceeds from a leap elsewhere to "nowhere," it may display disquieting traits which may easily be discerned in its literary expressions and extended to the utopian mode and the utopian spirit: a tendency to submit reality to dreams, to delineate self-contained schemas of perfection severed from the whole course of the human experience of value. This pathology has been described as "escapism," and it may develop traits which have often been compared to those of schizophrenia: a logic of all or nothing which ignores the labor of time. Hence the preference for spatial schematisms and the projection of the future in frozen models which have to be immediately perfect, as well as its lack of care for the first steps to be taken in the direction of the ideal city. Escapism is the eclipse of praxis, the denial of the logic of action which inevitably ties undesirable evils to preferred means and which forces us to choose between equally desirable but incompatible goals. To this eclipse of praxis may be referred the flight into writing and the affinity of the utopian mode for a specific literary genre, to the extent that writing becomes a substitute for acting.

At its ultimate stage the pathology of utopia conceals under its traits of futurism the nostalgia for some paradise lost, if not a regressive yearning for the maternal womb. Then utopia, which in the beginning was most candid in the public display of its aims, appears to be no less dissimulating than ideology. In this way both pathologies cumulate their symptoms in spite of the initial opposition between the integrative and the subversive function.

The time has come to account for this double dichotomy between, first, the two poles of ideology and, utopia, and second, the ambiguous variations possible internally to each pole. We shall attempt to do so in terms of the imagination.

We must begin, it seems to me, by attempting first to think about both ideology and utopia as a whole in terms of their most positive, constructive, and—if we may use the term—healthy or wholesome modalities. Then using Mannheim's concept of non-congruence, it will be possible to construe the integrative function of ideology and the subversive function of utopia together.

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At first glance, these two phenomena are simply the inverse of each other. But if we examine them more closely we see that they dialectically imply each other. The most "conservative" ideology, I mean one which does nothing more than parrot the social order and reinforce it, is ideology only because of the gap implied by what we might call, paraphrasing Freud, the "considerations of figurability" which are attached to the social image. Conversely, utopian imagination appears as merely eccentric and erratic. But this is only a superficial view. What decenters ourselves is also what brings us back to ourselves. So we see the paradox. On the one hand, there is no movement towards full humanity which does not go beyond the given; on the other hand, elsewhere leads back to here and now. It is, as Levinas remarks, "as if humanity were a genus which admitted at the heart of its logical place, or its extension, a total rupture; as if in going towards the fully human, we must transcend man. It is as if utopia were not the prize of some wretched wandering, but the clearing where man is revealed."

This interplay of ideology and utopia appears as an interplay of the two fundamental directions of the social imagination. The first tends toward integration, repetition, and a mirroring of the given order. The second tends to bringing astray because it is eccentric. But the one cannot work without the other. The most repetitive or reduplicative ideology, to the extent that it mediates the immediate social ties, the social-ethical substance, as Hegel would call it, introduces a gap, distance, and consequently something potentially eccentric. And as regards utopia, its most erratic forms, so long as they move within "a sphere directed towards the human," remain hopeless attempts to show what man fundamentally is when viewed in the clarity of utopian existence.

This is why the tension between ideology and utopia is insurpassable. It is even often impossible to tell whether this or that mode of thought is ideological or utopian. The line seemingly can only be drawn after the fact on the basis of a criterion of success which in turn may be called into question insofar as it is built upon the pretention that whatever succeeds is warranted. But what about abortive attempts? Do they not sometimes return at a later date and sometimes obtain the success that history had previously denied them?

The same phenomenology of social imagination gives us the key to the second aspect of our problem, namely that each term of the couple ideology-utopia develops its own pathology. If imagination is a process rather than a state of being, it becomes understandable that a specific dysfunction corresponds to each direction of the imaginative process.

The dysfunctioning of ideology is called distortion and dissimulation. We have seen above how these pathological figures constitute the privileged cases of dysfunctioning which are grafted on the integrative function of social imagination. Here let us only add that a primitive distortion or an original dissimulation is inconceivable. It is within the symbolic constitution of the social order that the dialectic of concealment and revelation arises. The reflective function of ideology can only be understood as arising from this ambiguous dialectic which already contains all the traits of non-congruence. It follows that the tie denounced by Marxism between the process of dissimulation and the interests of a class only constitutes a partial phenomenon. Any "superstructure" may function ideologically, be it science and technology or religion and philosophical idealism.

The dysfunctioning of utopia must also be understood as arising from the pathology of the social imagination. Utopia tends towards schizophrenia just as ideology tends toward dissimulation and distortion. This pathology is rooted in the eccentric function of utopia. It develops almost as a caricature of the ambiguity of a phenom-

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enon which oscillates between fantasy and creativity, between flight and return. "Nowhere" may or may not refer to the "here and now." But who knows whether such and such an erratic mode of existence may not prophesy the man to come? Who even knows if a certain degree of individual pathology is not the condition of social change, at least to the extent that such pathology brings to light the sclerosis of dead institutions? To put it more paradoxically, who knows whether the illness is not at the same time a part of the required therapy?

These troubling questions at least have the advantage of directing our regard towards one irreducible trait of social imagination, namely that we only attain it across and through the figures of false consciousness. We only take possession of the creative power of imagination through a relation to such figures of false consciousness as ideology and utopia. It is as though we have to call upon the "healthy" function of ideology to cure the madness of utopia and as though the critique of ideologies can only be carried out by a conscience capable of regarding itself from the point of view of "nowhere."